

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Applicant responds herein to the Office Action dated July 13, 2005.

Claim 1 stand rejected on grounds of anticipation by Schneider (4,981,031). Claims 1-6, 8 and 9 stand rejected on grounds of anticipation by VanderZee (5,979,212). Lastly, claims 5 and 6 stand rejected on the grounds of anticipation by Allgoewer (5,727,416). Reconsideration is requested in view of the amendments to the claims herein and the following remarks.

Preliminarily, the applicant has carefully reviewed the Examiner's comments under the caption "**Response to Applicant's Comments**" and responds to those remarks as noted below.

Preliminarily, please note that independent claim 1 incorporates the following limitations A) - C) as noted below.

A) The second carrier mechanism performs a feed operation for the plurality of the carriers located downstream which is different from a feed operation for the carrier located on the most upstream side performed by the first carrier mechanism.

B) The plurality of the carriers located downstream are connected together and are moved together in the direction of the press line by the second carrier mechanism.

C) The subject matter recited in dependent claim 3.

Support for the limitation A) can be found, for example, in the second paragraph of page 12 of the specification. Support for the limitation B) can be found, for example, in Figure 1 and lines 2-5 on page 7 of the specification. As noted, the limitation C) is from dependent claim 3.

Other claims have been amended to make them consistent with the amendments to claim 1. For example, claim 2 has been amended to remove the limitation which is also recited in claim 3 and claim 3 was canceled without prejudice. Claim 4 has been amended to also depend from claim 2.

Relative to the rejection of claim 1 and its dependent claims 2 and 4, the applicant respectfully traverses the Examiner's assertion in lines 1-10 of the last paragraph of page 3 of the Office Action, based on limitation A). In Schneider, a single carrier motion shown by reference numerals 82-85 of Fig. 4 is realized by a combination of two types of carriages which are respectively driven by different conveying rod systems 36 and 37 (column 4, lines 13-32). In

addition, all the carriages are connected to one another and are moved integrally (column 3, lines 37-42). Therefore, it is impossible for Schneider to realize a carrier motion of the other carriages that is different from a carrier motion of the most upstream carriage. In this way, Schneider fails to disclose or suggest claimed limitation A).

The applicant also respectfully traverses the Examiner's assertion in lines 10-11 of the last paragraph of page 3 of the Office Action. In Schneider, it is necessary to raise and lower the moving rails 18 which are heavy and along in the direction of the press line. In contrast, according to the invention as recited in claim 1, the cross bars are attached to the carriers such as to be capable of being raised and lowered. Therefore, according to the invention as recited in claim 1, it is sufficient to raise and lower the cross bars which are lighter in weight than the moving rails 18 of Schneider and the guide beams recited in claim 1. The structure of Schneider which raises and lowers the moving rails 18 requires a high driving force as compared to the invention as recited in claim 1 which raises and lowers the cross bars. Although claim 1 (and also the specification of the present application) does not specifically recite the weight of the cross bars and the guide beams, comparing the moving rails 18 and the traverses 34 of Schneider, a person having ordinary skill in the art could have easily understood that the claimed cross bars are lighter in weight than the moving rails 18 of Schneider and the claimed guide beams.

The applicant further respectfully traverses the Examiner's assertion in lines 1-14 of the first paragraph of page 4 of the Office Action based on limitation B). By connecting together the plurality of carriers located downstream and by moving together the plurality of the carriers, it is possible to feed the plurality of carriers using a single carrier mechanism, that is, the claimed second carrier mechanism. In contrast, in VanderZee, respective carriages such as carriages 126b and 128b shown in Fig. 4 of VanderZee are not connected together but are independent of each other. Therefore, it is necessary for VanderZee to provide a plurality of carrier mechanisms for the respective carriages, thereby making the structure of VanderZee complex.

The applicant finally respectfully traverses the Examiner's assertion in lines 14-20 of the first paragraph of page 4 of the Office Action based on limitation C). The Examiner points out that the cross bars 130 and 132 of VanderZee are moved simultaneously. However, even if the cross bars 130 and 132 were moved simultaneously, this merely implies that two opposing carriages which constitute a single group such as the carriages 126b and 128b are moved

simultaneously. Such a structure of VanderZee is clearly different from the claimed vertically moving bodies of a plurality of groups of adjacent carriers. VanderZee fails to disclose or suggest raising and lowering vertically moving bodies of a plurality of groups of adjacent carriers, connecting the drive devices which raise and lower these vertically moving bodies, and raising and lowering these vertically moving bodies simultaneously by any of the drive devices which are connected.

Turning to independent claim 5 and to its dependent claims 6 and 8-9, it is noted that this independent claim now incorporates the subject matter recited in allowable claim 7 and, therefore, is now in a condition to be formally allowed. Claim 10 has been canceled without prejudice.

It is also noted for the record that claim 5 has been further amended responsive to the Examiner's assertion in the last paragraph of page 4 through the first paragraph of page 5 of the Office Action. Claim 5, as presently worded, should be understood to recite that feed beams are movable in the direction of the press line. Support for this amendment can be found, for example, in Fig. 7 of the present application (see the left most arrow).

In view of the foregoing comments and remarks, it is submitted that each of the independent claims and their dependent claims are clearly directed to patentable subject matter and formal allowance thereof is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, the Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider the application, allow the claims and pass this case to issue.


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Date of Signature

Respectfully submitted,


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